

Louisiana's State Parks System can play a crucial role in upgrading the state's recreational facility inventory. There are acres of beautifully contoured land in Louisiana that could be converted into multipurpose recreation areas, including nature and hiking trails, at a relatively low cost. The state already owns some of the land. The Office of State Parks has the knowledge and skills for facility planning, as well as for planting and nurturing the appropriate trees, shrubbery, flowers and grasses in a manner consistent with environmental enhancement.

There are two basic groups of retirees, "rovers" and "settlers." The common link from a recreational demand standpoint is the need for the Office of State Parks to provide recreational and scenic opportunities in the form of hiking and nature trails and select water-based activities such as boating and fishing. The parks providing these opportunities would serve as the "core attractors" for the settlers who would be primarily day users. These settlers would locate and live in private developments near the parks. The key is the tie between the public state parks as the attractor and private recreational development, both recreational (supplemental to what the state parks provide) and residential development. Proximity to urban centers should be given attention, especially to help attract the "settlers" who may want a rural lifestyle with ample recreation opportunities, but who still desire access to the conveniences, cultural and educational assets of urban areas, giving a potential "settler" access to positive aspects of both urban and rural lifestyles, while providing ample recreational opportunities.

The state parks as "core attractors" would also attract the "rovers" who travel by automobile or RV and use the state parks for a period of time to enjoy the opportunities provided by both public and private entities. Both user groups are a viable, potential resource for economic development. Ease of access from major roadways, particularly Interstates 10, 12, 20 and 49, is important, as these "rovers" will be using the road system to travel across the country. To make a state park a true destination for this market, it must be easily accessed and actively promoted. Promotion could be accomplished by providing information at visitor centers, in-state tourism literature and with highway signage. The easier it is to stop, the more likely visitors will choose a state facility as the temporary landing place. Once they have stopped the benefit is multifaceted.

Another important factor is to develop and market the natural and cultural assets of our state. Many of the "rovers" travel the country to "experience her diversity." New Orleans, the Cajun culture — food, music and lifestyle — and historic plantation homes are extremely popular today. These are examples of the cultural amenities that should be promoted. The Atchafalaya Basin, the fishing and the wildlife of our state are examples of natural amenities that merit promotion. All of the assets of an area should be developed into a marketing plan that promotes not only what the Louisiana State Parks System provides, but also other opportunities that are available nearby. The marketing of an entire area surrounding a state park, state commemorative or state preservation area will attract the "rovers" who may otherwise continue through our state without stopping.



### AN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE

The unique natural and historical features found throughout the state parks system hold great potential for visitors of all ages to learn about and appreciate Louisiana's unusual environment and rich cultural heritage. Interpretive programs at all sites bring these features to life for young schoolchildren, adventurous families and curious retirees alike. It is important to understand that state parks holdings are much more than areas where people can camp, hike, swim or fish. Programs at state parks, such as ranger talks, guided tours and interpretive displays, allow visitors to understand the value of our natural resources. The programs provided at state commemorative areas interpret our state's history and culture. Programs provided at state preservation areas present Louisiana's natural systems and habitats, and the importance of preserving these areas.

provides programming to educate the public, and preserves these areas for future generations. By utilizing proper management of these natural resources, Louisiana wins. Not only do Louisiana's state parks allow access to some of the state's most remarkable natural areas, they also provide programs and facilities which enhance the outdoor experience while protecting the areas for years to come. The value of our natural resources is immeasurable; so is the value of Louisiana State Parks System as a guardian of these resources.

### A NATURAL RESOURCE

Part of the mission of the Office of State Parks is to preserve and protect the natural resources of our state. Louisiana has some of the most outstanding and important natural areas in the country. The vast estuaries of the coastal zone and the bottomland hardwoods of the Atchafalaya Basin are examples of precious resources in danger of being lost. The Office of State Parks, through acquisition, proper development and management, provides opportunities for visitors to access these areas for recreational opportunities,



# GUIDING THE FUTURE

This plan is designed to provide the Office of State Parks strategies to deal with the foreseeable benefits and obstacles of the development of its holdings. However, as history has demonstrated, there are many unforeseeable elements that may arise to complicate even the most well-laid plans. To deal with the unforeseen, it is important to clearly define the mission of Louisiana State Parks. It is also valuable to determine why and how this mission is to be accomplished from a general perspective. This section outlines the mission statement of the Office of State Parks, provides the philosophy statement, and reviews the classification system for facilities. These three areas provide the backbone for the entire State Parks Master Plan 1997-2012 and guide the future operation of the Office of State Parks.

## *Mission Statement*

The mission statement is based upon statutory authorization for the establishment of the Office of State Parks and was made a part of the GSRI plan. It has stood the test of time and has been carried forward into this master plan.

It is the mission of the Office of State Parks to serve the people of Louisiana and their visitors by:

- *Preserving and protecting natural areas of unique or exceptional scenic value for the inspiration and benefit of not only the present generation, but also for generations to come.*
- *Establishing and operating parks that provide recreational use of natural resources and outdoor recreation in natural surroundings.*
- *Preserving, protecting and portraying historic and scientific sites of statewide importance.*
- *Portraying and interpreting plant and animal life, geology, and all other natural features and processes included in the various state parks.*

To fully meet these goals the Office of State Parks must properly maintain and operate its existing facilities, develop new areas and improve the existing areas in the Louisiana State Parks System, provide programming opportunities and personnel at all Office of State Parks' holdings and develop and maintain natural areas for uses sensitive to its mission.



*Fairview Riverside State Park*



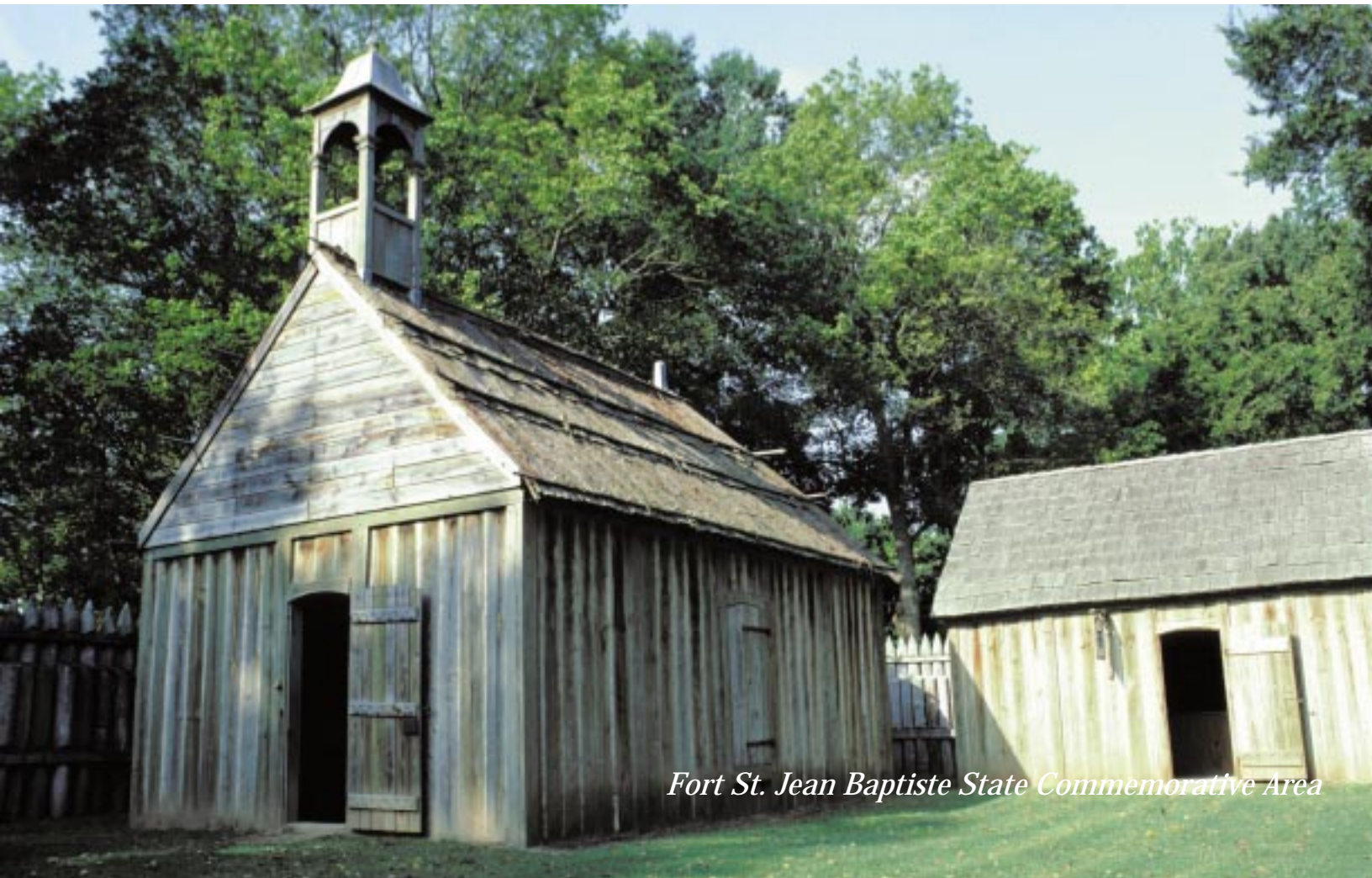
# OF STATE PARKS

## *Philosophy Statement*

The philosophy statement consists of the guiding ideals of the Office of State Parks and should be inherent in all decision-making processes, operations and management of the Louisiana State Parks System.

*The Office of State Parks understands its role to be proactive in the development of programs, promotion, and facilitation of use of areas under its direction. It enthusiastically accepts its responsibilities for preservation of natural areas, provision of recreation in natural settings, and presentation of culturally significant places. Interpretation, education and recreation are viewed as keys to providing better understanding and appreciation of the state's resources by its citizens and its visitors. Activities of*

*the Office of State Parks are guided by plans of action that include specific objectives and the adherence to the criteria established in the Office of State Parks land holdings classification system. Such observances are essential to the successful development and management of the Louisiana State Parks System. The Office of State Parks strives for: coordination between agencies, allied interests, and user groups; professional training and competence of its personnel; exemplary planning, design, construction and maintenance of its facilities; active development and use of interpretation and recreation programs; creation of public awareness of Office of State Parks programs; and development of a stable funding base to provide for maintaining continuity of facility, program, and personnel quality.*



*Fort St. Jean Baptiste State Commemorative Area*

# Criteria for State Parks Facilities

The GSRI plan established criteria for each type of holding: state parks, state commemorative areas and state preservation areas. This classification system has been brought forward. Each type of site plays a different role within the Louisiana State Parks System. Collectively the different sites allow the Office of State Parks to fulfill its mission while creating economic benefit to the state.

## CRITERIA FOR STATE PARKS

State parks are natural areas which, when evaluated on a statewide basis, possess outstanding potential for recreational usage. The natural area must possess outstanding scenic and natural qualities to ensure recreational opportunity of high quality in a natural setting.

The criteria for the selection of areas to be designated as state parks shall be:

(1) Size: A state park shall be of sufficient size to ensure efficient operation and maintenance of its recreation facilities and accommodations and to maintain sufficient buffer to preserve the natural integrity of the area.

All state parks, except those currently within the Louisiana State Parks System, must adhere to an absolute minimum standard of 250 acres and a preferred minimum size standard of 400 acres. The Office of State Parks will determine in each case the minimum standard that will be applicable.

(2) Location and Accessibility: A state park will be located in such a way as to take advantage of natural and man-made resources

offering opportunities for recreation and education in a natural setting and accessibility to nearby population centers. Furthermore, the Office of State Parks shall adopt policies governing the location of state parks in proximity to incorporated municipalities.

State parks are natural areas of statewide significance with excellent recreational potential. State parks fulfill two needs. First, they provide a variety of recreational opportunities and second, they preserve a portion of the natural area. Typical activities at a state park include: fishing, boating, cycling, hiking, picnicking, swimming; and tent, trailer and cabin camping.

## CRITERIA FOR STATE COMMEMORATIVE AREAS

State commemorative areas are those areas which, when evaluated on a statewide basis, possess historical, cultural or memorial significance. The principal function of a state commemorative area shall be to preserve and interpret a specific historical, cultural or memorial theme.

The criteria for selection of an area to be designated a state commemorative area shall be:

(1) Size: A state commemorative area will be of sufficient size to encompass the area or feature being commemorated and of a sufficient size to adequately commemorate the event, feature or culture for which the area is established. Sufficient buffer will be provided to minimize any encroachments which may impair the values and inhibit public use and

appreciation of the area.

(2) Location and Accessibility: A state commemorative area will be located within the environment of the event, feature, culture or memorial which it represents.

